

HOME GLADSTONE QLD

Lucy and Sebastian Giardina with their children, Bleu and Birdie, at Eden Cottage, their home in Gladstone, Qld. **FACING PAGE** The dining room, painted in Dulux Blue Balm, reflects the home's heritage origins and tropical location with bountiful greenery and furniture sourced from second-hand stores and local boutiques.



LET IT GROW

SWEET FLORALS, PASTEL POPS AND A QUAIN T KITCHEN
GARDEN BELIE EDEN COTTAGE'S TIES TO AN INDUSTRIAL PAST.

WORDS RACHEL WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY HANNAH PUECHMARIN
STYLING CHERYL CARR



EDEN COTTAGE'S UNDENIABLE feminine energy distracts from its industrial beginnings. Originally built in the Central Queensland mining town of Mount Morgan in the 1930s, the home was moved to the nearby port town of Gladstone in the 1950s, before becoming home to the Giardina family in 2019. "I always knew our house was female," says owner Lucy Giardina, 34. "When we first walked in, it had these romantic aspects, like the pressed metal ceiling panels, which have since been amplified by the florals and pastel colours."

Lucy, a medical administrator and medical science student, and her husband Sebastian, a chef, live in the home with their daughter Birdie, six, and son Bleu, five, as well as Rosie the Maltese cross, Persephone, a rescue cat, and a brood of chooks out the back.

Not always the idyllic family residence it is now, Eden Cottage, which sits on a 763-square-metre block in Gladstone – on the traditional lands of the Bailai, Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng and Taribelang Bunda people – needed a serious makeover when Lucy and Sebastian, 49, bought it. "We bought this house that was half falling apart and many people thought we were crazy," explains Lucy. "But I always think we were meant to own this home. It sat vacant for 18 months before we purchased it and I like to think it was waiting for us."

Determined to preserve the cottage's historic charm, Lucy and Sebastian avoided decorating trends, instead opting for a considered, sympathetic restoration guided by the home's original features. "We always said we didn't want to take a beautiful old heritage home and make it modern," says Lucy. "So, even though we've still got holes >



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Lucy relaxes beneath a portrait of her great-grandfather; the front entrance features Borastapeter Lilacs wallpaper from Natty and Polly; Bleu and Birdie love their treehouse adventures; paper ornaments from Harolds Finishing Touches in Toowoomba; the antique bar cart was a lucky Facebook Marketplace find; Birdie's gorgeous bedroom is adorned with Sanderson Dune Hares wallpaper from Natty and Polly; the antique gramophone, sideboard and various artworks were purchased online; busy bees at work in the garden. **FACING PAGE** A linen press from local store Sassi is topped with a sentimental picnic basket. "My dad gave it to my mum for Mother's Day about 30 years ago," says Lucy.



“If I can source something second-hand or use a family heirloom, I will always choose that over a trending item.”

The light, bright sitting room features a day bed gifted by friends, floral cushions and a striped bolster, both from Bonnie and Neil, vintage artworks and an eye-catching mounted deer's head which Sebastian bought second-hand years ago. The original casement windows were restored by Lucy by hand and finished with layers of Dulux Pre School.





CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT Festive bunting and charming storybooks brighten Bleu's room; Lucy uses clippings from her garden to make rosemary hydrosol and rosewater; Rosie, the family's 12-year-old Maltese cross, relaxes in the lounge room; treasured family heirlooms include vintage scales, tea tins and a handwritten cookbook. **FACING PAGE** The serene master bedroom features original panelled walls and hoop pine floorboards.



“I always think we were meant to own this home...
I like to think it was waiting for us.”

in the floors, we've retained a lot of the character and that's all part of the enchantment for us.”

Choosing second-hand and period pieces wherever possible, Lucy sourced furniture and decor that felt in line with the home's era from Facebook Marketplace and local antique dealers. Desiring a sustainable home with a low environmental impact, Lucy says: “I look for classic pieces that won't need to be replaced. If I can source something second-hand or use a family heirloom, I will always choose that over a trending item.”

This sensitive approach has at times been a source of frustration for the family, as the combination of a tight budget and local trade shortages has meant the project is still in progress five years after it began. “Living in a rural town has pros and cons, but one of the biggest cons is you don't have a lot of choices – especially for boutique and specialist tradespeople and products,” says Lucy.

However, instead of deflating the couple, all those challenging factors inspired Lucy and Sebastian to find creative solutions. “Our toxic trait is that we think we can do anything,” jokes Lucy. “During COVID when we started the renovation, there were no trades available, so taking on a lot of the work ourselves was born of necessity.”

Learning plenty along the way, Lucy says there were times when big jobs almost became too much. “We found

out the hard way why no-one takes on so much of the work [themselves],” she says. “For example, restoring windows – you don't realise until you do one for yourself what a big job it is.”

Although the work is ongoing, the duo has already achieved their endgame. “The goal has always been to create a haven to raise our children in,” says Lucy. “We have created somewhere that truly suits our personalities and lifestyle.”

For the Giardinas (whose name aptly means ‘garden’ in Italian), prioritising a connection with the outdoors and bringing nature inside was paramount. “I love to work out in the garden. It's my happy place, with the chickens, vegies, bees and washing on the line. All these things feel very nostalgic and important to me,” says Lucy. “Sebastian is a chef and comes from an Italian family, so we enjoy cooking and eating, and growing our food as a family.”

Overall, Lucy describes the process of restoring Eden Cottage as slow, but immensely satisfying. “For me, the most rewarding part has been learning new things and challenging myself,” she explains. “I now appreciate how much work, time and energy goes into things, which you don't get if you just pay someone to do it. I feel very proud of that.”

For more lovely country homes, visit homestolove.com.au

HOME GLADSTONE QLD

Rosie rests beside the outdoor table, where the family enjoys sunset dinners featuring Lucy's homegrown basil, tomatoes, thyme, eggplant and oregano. "All the good Italian ones," she says.

"The garden is my happy place, with the chickens, vegies, bees and washing on the line."